CLAIMS

1. An information service distribution system comprising:

at least a first provider of information to be broadcast to viewers in at least one televison distribution system, said provider including programming which periodically generates one or more information files and stores said files in a provider storage medium;

a central server for receiving said information files from said provider storage medium, said central server including a plurality of storage locations for storing said information files;

a provider server for periodically transferring said information files in said provider storage medium to said central server;

a least a first local server for receiving said files from said central server and sending said files to a corresponding cable headend in a television distribution system for broadcast to viewers in said televison distribution system; and

programming in said central server for periodically checking whether information files are present in any of said storage locations, and transferring any such files to said local server.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein said provider server includes programming that periodically checks whether said provider has transferred updated files to said provider storage medium, and transfers any such updated files to said central server.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein said provider server communicates with said central server and said central server communicates with said at least first local server through a communications medium selected from the group comprising the Internet, a wireless link, a satellite, a telephone line and a dedicated communications line.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein said central server further includes programming for checking whether said files in said storage locations have been updated by said provider server and sending any of said files that have been updated to said at least first local server.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein said central server programming includes script programming written in a language selected from the group including PERL, C, JAVA, VB

and PYTHON for formatting said information files into files of the type selected from the group including HTML, GIF and JPEG, and sending said files via a designated protocol to said at least first local server.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein said local server further includes an editor for facilitating review and approval of the content of said files prior to being sent to said headend.

7. The system of claim 1, further including a private network for interfacing said local server to said headend.

8. The system of claim 1, wherein said provider provides information of the type selected from the group comprising weather, news, sports, children's programs, entertainment, technology, finance and music information.

9. An information service distribution system comprising:

at least a first provider of information to be broadcast to viewers in at least one televison distribution system, said provider including programming which periodically generates one or more information files and stores said files in a provider storage medium;

a central server for receiving said information files from said provider storage medium, said central server including a plurality of storage locations for storing said information files;

a provider server for periodically transferring said information files in said provider storage medium to said central server, said provider server includes programming that periodically checks whether said provider has transferred updated files to said provider storage medium, and transfers any such updated files to said central server;

a least a first local server for receiving said files from said central server and sending said files to a corresponding cable headend in a television distribution system for broadcast to viewers in said televison distribution system, said local server including an editor for facilitating review and approval of the content of said files prior to being sent to said headend. and

programming in said central server for periodically checking whether said files in said storage locations have been updated by said provider server and transferring any such files to said local server.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein said provider server communicates with said central server and said central server communicates with said at least first local server through a communications medium selected from the group comprising the Internet, a wireless link, a satellite, a telephone line and a dedicated communications line.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein said central server programming includes script programming written in a language selected from the group including PERL, C, JAVA, VB and PYTHON for formatting said information files into files of the type selected from the group including HTML, GIF and JPEG, and sending said files via a designated protocol to said at least first local server.

12. The system of claim 9, further including a private network for interfacing said local server to said headend.

13. The system of claim 9, wherein said provider provides information of the type selected from the group comprising news, sports, weather and stock information.

14. A method for broadcasting information in a televison distribution system comprising the steps of:

providing at least a first provider of information to be broadcast to viewers in at least one televison distribution system, said provider periodically generating one or more information files to be transferred to at least one televison distribution system and storing said information files in a provider storage medium;

periodically transferring said information files stored in said provider storage medium to one or more of a plurality of storage locations in a central server;

periodically checking whether any information files are stored in any of said storage locations, and if so, sending any such information files to at least one local server; and

sending said information files from said local server to a cable headend in a television distribution system for broadcast to viewers in said televison distribution system.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein said step of periodically transferring said information files stored in said provider storage medium to one or more of a plurality of storage locations in a central server further comprises checking whether said provider has transferred updated files to said provider storage medium, and transferring said information files only if they have been updated.

16. The method of claim 14, wherein said step of sending said information files from said local server to a cable headend in a television distribution system for broadcast to viewers in said televison distribution system further includes the steps of reviewing the content of said files prior to being sent to said headend.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said step of reviewing the content of said files further comprises sending said files to said headend only if the content of said files is approved, and if not, sending a message to said central server indicating that said information files have not been approved.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising the steps of formatting said information files in said central server as HTML pages, sending said HTML pages via a designated protocol to said at least first local server, converting said HTML pages to one or more JPEG files for review and reconverting said JPEG files to one or more HTML pages after they have been reviewed and are ready to send to said headend.

19. The method of claim 14, further comprising the steps of formatting said information files in said central server as image files of the type selected from the group including HTML pages, GIF and JPEG files, and sending said image files via a designated protocol to said at least first local server.

20. The method of claim 14, wherein said provider provides information of the type selected from the group comprising weather, news, sports, children's programs, entertainment, technology, finance and music information.